

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

" either to avoid tumult, or to increase the alarm by assuming the appearance of a secret tribunal."¹ Even men of such high character as Ristoro Canigiani and Stoldo Altoviti pursued the same policy. From the outset, Catherine had fallen into the hands of this faction, which by tradition claimed to be that of the Church, and it is clear that its more unscrupulous members were simply making her a tool for their private ends, dragging her name into their campaign of excluding their own personal enemies from office. Niccolo Soderini's well-meant suggestion to Fra Raimondo, and Catherine's own unfortunate speech to the officials of the Party, were, indeed, bearing bitter fruit. It was in vain that she sent Stefano Maconi to individual members to plead for moderation, in vain that she herself implored them not to pervert the means of securing peace to a cause of civil war, in thus giving vent to their own hates. The number of those who, during these months that Catherine was in Florence and Ristoro Canigiani held office as one of the captains of the Party, found themselves excluded from office, without explanation or appeal, was daily increasing. All through March and April the work went on. At length, on April 22, the captains took the extreme step of admonishing Giovanni Dini, the powerful member of the Eight, and, on April 30, among seven other prominent citizens, they admonished Piero Donati, who had been drawn as one of the priors, and Maso di Neri, who was one of the Twelve.² This brought things to a crisis.

In the new Signoria that came into office on May I, 1378, Salvestro de' Medici—a strong Guelf, but intensely obnoxious to the Party—was Gonfaloniere of Justice. While openly declaring his intention of overthrowing the prepotency of the faction, he was ardently in favour of peace with the Church, and it was, perhaps, on his initiative that the ambassadors to Rome were empowered

¹ Capponi, *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*, II. p. 2. Cf. Rodolico, *La Democrazia Fiorentina*, pp 171-176.

² *Anmimo Florentine*, pp. 351-353 ; Ammirato, I. 2, pp. 713, 714 ; *Legenda*, III. vi. 30, 31 (§§ 424,425), where Fra Raimondo seems to imply that Catherine approved the admonishing of Giovanni Dim.